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SUMMARY

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ORGANIZING FOR AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT

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ORGANIZING FOR AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT

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1. There are two points on which attention must be focused in organizing for agricultural development. One is the individual farm or holding. The other is the wider economy as it affects agriculture. This paper is primarily concerned with the first of these.

2. In most countries the individual farm operator, whether owner, tenant or hired manager, is the key decision-maker in agriculture. If agricultural production is to be increased, he must be induced to make the decisions and take the steps necessary to increase it. The key to agricultural development is to make it possible and attractive for the operator of each farm or holding to change his farming practices in ways that will increase production on a sustained basis.

3. If agricultural production is to be substantially increased, three conditions must be met:

(a) First, provision must be made for developing locally-tested combinations of improved practices which, if adopted by farmers, will increase production on their farms;

(b) Second, production supplies and equipment of the kinds and quality farmers must have if they are to put improved practices into effect must be locally available when needed;

(c) Third, individual farmers must be convinced that recommended practices will in fact increase production on their farms and that it is to their advantage to adopt them.

4. On most of the cultivated lands of the earth there are variations in soils, available plant nutrients, water-air relationships in the soil, sunlight, and air and soil temperatures during the growing season, not only from area to area but in greater or less degree from farm to farm and even from field to field. Because of these variations, standardized recommendations for large areas of land are seldom, if ever, justified. What is needed are locally-tested combinations of improved practices and assistance to farmers in adapting recommended practices to their individual situations, taking into account physical factors, economic considerations and the farmer's financial position and managerial ability.

5. If agricultural production is to be increased, production requisites of the kinds and quality required to put improved practices into effect must be available. If they are to be widely used, requisites must be (a) technically effective,

(b) dependable as to quality, (c) available locally when needed, and (d) fairly priced. Too often in planning agricultural programs, too little attention and too few resources are devoted to the production and distribution of production requisites.

6. As agriculture moves from the traditional through the transitional and into the commercial stage, credit is used more and more to finance production and a well-organized production credit system becomes increasingly important. If the system is to serve farmers most effectively it is important that: (a) Loans be based primarily upon analyses of the ability of individual borrowers to repay from farm income rather than upon their ability to pledge collateral; (b) the periods for which loans are made be sufficiently long to permit borrowers not only to produce the crop or livestock products being financed but to market them in an orderly manner; (c) credit be readily available when needed; and (d) farmers be able to borrow at reasonable cost.

7. Inducing farmers to adopt improved practices almost always depends upon not one but a combination of actions and activities integrated as part of a single program. Such activities usually include programs to develop locally-tested combinations of improved practices; educational programs and local demonstrations of improved practices; and programs to make suitable production requisites, including credit, available when needed. In addition, it may be necessary in some cases to establish price floors for the more important agricultural products and modify land tenure systems in appropriate ways. Failure to take effective action in one field may largely nullify actions taken in others. All of the principal inhibiting factors must be reduced or eliminated if agricultural production is to proceed on a sustained basis.

8. It is of the greatest importance that all activities designed to make it possible for farmers to increase production and attractive for them to do so be effectively coordinated at the local level. The first step in the development of a program to increase agricultural production ordinarily should be to organize, in a limited number of areas, locally-coordinated activities to improve managerial decision-making and husbandry practices by individual farm operators. After testing the program in a limited number of areas, it can then be expanded throughout the country as manpower and other resources become available.

S - 1608 E - Nov.1962 - 1,600